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"Separation." application of the concept in child placement

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"SEPARATION." APPLICATION OF THE CONCEPT IN CHILD PLACEMENT

A THESIS
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SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of Procedure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE CONCEPT OF SEPARATION</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. CASE ANALYSIS</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Significance

It has been the accepted belief that children should not be separated from their families. Despite efforts to keep members of the family together, however, there are situations in which the best plan seems to be placement of the child in a foster home. Some children are deprived of their parents through death, desertion, or separation. Others may be without suitable care in their homes because of the continued incapacity of both parents due to illness or mental disability. Some children may need specialized care, occasioned by their own serious health or behavior problems, which may be beyond the resources of their own homes. In all of these instances, and in others, provisions must be made for a foster home with parents who can give to the child the love, care, understanding, and guidance so essential to developing within the child his own potentialities for useful living.

Separation of the child from his parents and home cannot be undertaken lightly, since separation in many instances is the climax of a long series of traumatic relationships and events. Separation from his parents is only the first of many problems the child must face in his own way, through the help of the caseworker. The child feels different because, unlike other youngsters, he is not living with his parents. He needs understanding and help with his feelings about these differences, and what they mean to him. As we see children living through the placement experience with all that it entails, we will need to utilize our greatest skills to try to support and strengthen them so that they can understand and accept their differences, face the many problems inherent in placement and be free to develop their
own potentialities.

In recent years foster home placement workers have given considerable attention to the matter of encouraging a good parent-child relationship even when separation is necessary. The writer wished to explore further into the ways in which separation is responded to by both parents and child.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to present theoretical concepts of separation and the evidences of such theory in case materials.

**Method of Procedure**

The case study method was used to illustrate the concept of separation. Books, pamphlets, articles, and unpublished literature served as a source of theory and as a framework of reference.

This study included thirteen cases selected from the list of dependent terminations of the Division of Child Welfare, Cuyahoga County Welfare Department, Cleveland, Ohio in 1952. During this year there were 132 cases terminated. The tenth case and every tenth case thereafter was drawn as a sample. From each case selected, only one child was chosen for the study. In a few of the cases, there was more than one child placed, but it was felt that the factors necessitating the placement of the child studied would also serve as a basis for the placement of his siblings.
CHAPTER II

THE CONCEPT OF SEPARATION

All of us face separation of some type during our lives. It is inevitable. Separation occurs from the moment of birth until death. Some types of separation are: separation from the mother's womb, weaning, foster home placement, adoption, institution placement, first days at school, first days at college, moving from one home to another, marriage, desertion of one of the parents, war, and divorce. In order to lessen the forcefulness of separation in the formative years of the child's development, the mother must have an active part in the separation of the child from her.1

Feelings of dependence are found early in life. The baby at birth is completely dependent upon the outside world, especially the mother, for its very existence. Even after its period of infancy the child is not independent. The human animal needs fourteen or fifteen years before he can get along without adults and take care of himself. It is evident that the small child slowly gives up his infantile methods of obtaining gratification and proceeds in his development because he feels certain of his mother's love. It is important, therefore, for the child to have his mother near to satisfy his needs. As long as his mother is in view or hearing, he feels safe.

Each step in the child's psychosexual development is inaugurated by a frustration, which gives him a feeling of discomfort, and this feeling causes him to develop new skills in his ability to live. One type of frustration, which is faced by the child during the oral period, is that of separation associated with weaning.2

1Class notes in Child-Family Seminar, 1954.

No matter how carefully the child is cared for, he has to experience one major frustration in his early life—he has to be weaned from the breast. It is desirable that he be breast-fed for as many months as possible, and that complete weaning not take place until after the ninth or tenth month. It is important that weaning be a gradual process, for, if it is done suddenly, the child will show traumatic reactions which might affect his later development.¹

Observation has shown that some mothers use very cruel and unnecessary types of weaning which have disastrous effects on the child's later development. Such was the case of a mother who decided she would not spoil her child, so at the age of two months she weaned him suddenly from the breast and went on a vacation of several weeks, leaving him to the care of a total stranger. Thus the child was frustrated not only in the feeding process but also in his relation to his mother.²

After the immediate reactions to these frustrating experiences have disappeared, the child no longer seems the same. Instead of being relaxed, happy and carefree, he seems tense, anxious, and apprehensive. He is apprehensive lest something happen that will cause him to suffer again the discomfort through which he has already lived. One concerned with frustration in a child in the first year of life should remember that it arises from one of four sources:

1. the child has undergone a series of painful experiences during his feeding,
2. his need to suck for pleasure and not for nutrition has been frustrated,
3. his certainty that he can depend on his mother for the satisfaction of his needs has been destroyed because of her attitude to him, her behavior to him, or by the circumstances of her life, and
4. his emotional comfort has been destroyed by wrangling in his environment.

The first and third factors show the most violent and immediate effects because they are in reality a threat to his life. The child cannot formulate in his mind the idea that if his mother leaves him or if he cannot eat without hurting himself he will die, but shows a reaction

¹Ibid., p. 39.
²Ibid.
which, if it could be translated into a concept, would have that content.

The child's symptoms as a result of these frustrations fall into three groups:

1. anxiety symptoms such as frequent crying, restlessness, insomnia, vomiting, and diarrhea,
2. feeding disorders ranging all the way from simple refusal of food to prolonged vomiting, and
3. negativistic, antagonistic behavior to the parents.

Nosologically, therefore, the infant under one year may show an acute or chronic anxiety state, a conversion hysteria, or a chronic aggressive reaction pattern.

The mature loving mother can depend on her own intuitive reactions to prevent the baby's undergoing the unnecessary frustrations. However, even though the mother may be mature and loving, fate may step in and she may die. The child realizes to some extent that this suffering came upon him from without. He had nothing to do with the cause, it is as if an adverse fate had fallen upon him. In his apprehension lest he re-experience the discomfort, he dreads lest fate again be unkind to him. This apprehension gives him a sense of impending disaster and he tends to view the future as if a malignant fate were waiting to pounce on him. He begins to behave in ways that will avoid the disaster he anticipates. Since he has reacted in a specific way, by desiring to eat constantly or by clinging to his mother to a frustrating experience, that specific way of reacting is more something belonging to him than other methods might be. So in the future he tends to react to frustration in the same general pattern. ¹

The majority of mothers love their children, but some mothers are not aware of the importance of their intuitive reactions to the child, or they are afraid to depend on them. This is usually evident in breast feeding and separation. Many mothers long to nurse their babies, but fear they are doing wrong if the doctor or nurse disagrees, or they feel that their friends or relatives will laugh at them for being old-fashioned. Similarly, we find that the mother may love the child and be heartsick at the thought of leaving her baby when she goes on a vacation. However, she goes, stifling her own feelings by being sure the child will get good physical care by the new surroundings and experiences. In both of these instances the mother inter-

¹Ibid., p. 38-39.
ferees with her own intuitively correct feelings because she dreads some external condemnation, and the child suffers as a result. Usually we find that the behavior of the mother is the result of a conflict between the feeling of love toward the baby and the selfish desire to do things that give the mother more pleasure; in the conflict, the latter impulse wins, often to the point that the mother is aware only of her desire for pleasure for herself, and is unaware of her feeling of love for the child.¹

If a child is weaned with such an attitude, he will later in life feel very insecure about his livelihood or his place in the esteem of those around him. He may feel insecure about whether or not he will have enough to eat, or whether he will be able to survive by holding his job. If in business, he will constantly fear business failure.

In relation to foster home placement, affectional family ties are primary in growth experience. It is easy to see why a loved and secure child may be easier to place than an insecure one. The rejected child clings psychologically with an agonized longing to the relationships which have failed him, and he must be prepared for placement.²

In the placement of children, one must know how each stage of development affects children placed at certain ages and the unresolved conflict at any age. Children do not grow up uniformly in every respect; some are slower in emotional development than others, and most are uneven. One must understand the early developmental years to work with the phenomenon of regression which usually takes place after family separation. One must also understand the child who, in growing up, has had too little time and oppor-

¹Ibid., pp. 39-40.

tunity for gratifications or proper restraints.\textsuperscript{1}

The child needs the security and backing of the visible presence of two parents—a father and a mother—in order to solve the problem of his conflicting feelings toward them. During the phallic period of the child's psycho-sexual development we are concerned about what happens to the child if one parent is absent because of death, marital separation, or separation through the necessity of patriotism or business. Since there are two parents, and since their sex and the sex of the child all affect the result, it seems feasible to consider five forms of the problem. These are: the effect on the boy of the absence of the father, the effect on the boy of the absence of the mother, the effect on the girl of the absence of the mother, the effect on the girl of the absence of the father, and the effect on either boy or girl of the separation from both parents.

The small boy needs the presence of his father for two reasons: he needs a male person to imitate, and he needs a masculine foil with whom he can learn how to temper and exercise his feelings of aggression and love, for the adult male's main difficulties of adjustment lie in his relationships with other persons of the same sex.

The child needs a father not only as someone to love, but as someone to serve as a pattern for his own life. The attainment of normal femininity or masculinity is more difficult for the child who grows up without a father. The younger the child when the absence occurs, the more serious will be its influence.

The presence of a visible father is necessary during the period from birth to the age of six or seven. It is less necessary but still very important during the latent period, and is much less important although de-

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 269.
sirable during adolescence. In adult life the man derives pleasure from the fact that he has a father although there is no need for his existence.\(^1\)

If a boy is brought up in a fatherless home, he suffers from the fact that he has no father to imitate. During this stage, the small boy loves his father and desires to be exactly like him. In his daily life he observes his father very closely, and soon finds himself behaving exactly like his father. This reaction is so automatic that the child is unaware that it takes place. If there is no father present with whom the boy can identify, this process does not take place, and the boy is deprived of the advantage of having at his disposal the useful reaction patterns which the father has developed from his own life experiences for solving his conflicts, and which have contributed to his success.\(^2\)

The boy who is brought up in a fatherless home is deprived of the benefit of his father's knowledge of the world and of life. Although he can identify with his mother, this identification is not very helpful to the boy. His mother has learned about life and the world from the female point of view; this viewpoint is of little benefit to the male person, for masculine ways of thinking and feeling are different from feminine ones. The boy who has been deprived of the presence of his father has to meet life with little real knowledge of how other men think and feel, and so is at a constant disadvantage.\(^3\)

The lack of a father with whom to identify works a deeper psychological harm on the boy than the difficulty in thinking and feeling definitely in a masculine way. The boy identifies with the father because he loves him and wants to be like his father. However, his love protests against this solution and impels him to a better one. By

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\(^1\)English and Pearson, op. cit., p. 91.

\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Ibid.
identification with his father he learns to renounce through love for another person the uncultured methods of gratification for his needs and desires realizing that such renunciation still permits him their gratification and does not expose him to the anxiety that would be his lot if they could not be gratified.

When a boy is brought up in a fatherless home, there is no possibility of this renunciation through identification taking place nor is there any need for it, because there is no father to love. As a result of this, the boy becomes overwhelmed with anxiety and if he attempts to abolish the anxiety he acts in a fumbling, ineffectual, unsocial manner which gets him into trouble, and this further pain is added to his suffering of anxiety.

Often the mother contributes to the boy's difficulty. She is deprived of a husband and may try to make up to herself for her own deprivation by trying to obtain her gratification from her son. A result as serious, if not more so, follows when the father dies during the height of the boy's Oedipus conflict.¹

It would be foolish to say that his father's death makes no difference to a child or that it is easy for a mother to make it up to him in other ways. But if the job is well handled, the boy can continue to grow up normal and well adjusted. The mother's feeling is most important. She may feel lonely or anxious or cross at times, and she will sometimes take it out on the child. This will not hurt him too much, however; the important thing is for her to go on being a normal human being, keeping up her friendships, her recreations and her outside activities as far as she can. It is more valuable to the child to have his mother stay cheerful and outgoing, than to have his routine stay perfect. It will be harmful to him, if the mother wraps all her activity, thoughts and affection around him.²

During the height of the boy's Oedipus complex, he is jealous of his father, hates and fears him and wishes he would die. He believes that his wishes are magical and will avail where his actions would fail, thus should his father leave the home at this time the boy finds that the result is the opposite of what he expected. The boy quickly realizes that this event has

¹Ibid., p. 92.

²Benjamin Spock, Baby and Child Care (New York, 1947), pp. 466-467.
brought him pain rather than pleasure and may develop a feeling of guilt about any aggressive wish. Even when the separation is not permanent, but long-continued, the effect on the boy is the same but perhaps not so marked.\textsuperscript{1}

It can be seen that separation from the father constitutes a definitely injurious situation in the boy's development. These reactions may continue into adult life if nothing is done about the situation. If other events occur in his life which make up for his deprivation, or if he is provided with a substitute father, the effect of the trauma is not long-lived.\textsuperscript{2}

The absence of the mother is not so serious to the boy as the absence of the father. The boy is not brought up in a completely motherless home. There is usually some mother substitute present, so the boy is exposed to intimate personal relationships with some woman. Arguing from what happens when a girl is brought up in a fatherless home, we suppose that if the boy were raised completely isolated from women there is a probability that he would develop into an adult homosexual. Any long-continued separation from the mother has a definite effect on the small boy. The relation with the mother is different from that with the father, so the effect is bound to be different. The mother is the main love object of the small boy and separation from her will affect his erotic relationships more than his aggressive, ambitious ones.\textsuperscript{3}

When children are separated from their mother, they are retarded in their development. A child who has been toilet trained may begin bed wetting. There may be emotional upheaval and loss of function, such as speech. This regressive demand for the mother's love will last until he finds a mother

\textsuperscript{1}English and Pearson, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 93-94.
\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Ibid.}
substitute; when this occurs, his development will start again. Although the child's development may seem to proceed, and the separation from the mother seems to be forgotten, the memory of the pain has only been repressed and tends to become a governing factor in the child's life. We know that, as the child grows up, he may tend to avoid any close relationship with women. He has been hurt by the prototype of all women, and therefore believes that all women have a tendency to hurt men. The psychological mechanism underlying this type of behavior is known as inhibition.1

As such a child matures into adulthood, he usually falls in love with a woman, and as soon as he is sure she loves him, he deserts her or acts in such a way as to break her heart. Since he has been hurt by a woman he will now take revenge on this one. Sometimes after marrying a woman and treating her badly and then leaving her, he marries again quite satisfactorily. It is as if, having taken revenge on one woman, he now can have a healthy relationship with sex. There are two psychological mechanisms underlying this type of behavior. The first is known as displacement; the individual having certain emotional reactions expresses them toward a person other than the real object. The second is known as reaction formation wherein one changes an instinctual drive into its opposite. In this instance, the child had to be passive in a very painful situation. He could overcome this pain by becoming active in inflicting the pain on another person, that is, he changes passivity (one instinctual drive) into activity (its opposite).2

Another type of psychological mechanism is repetition compulsion. This is evident when the man may fall in love only with a woman who he is certain will desert him, who in the pursuance of her interests will be away from him a great deal, who is an invalid, or who has a serious physical condition from which he knows she will die shortly. It is as if he said, "In my first relationship with a woman I suffered much at her hands. Because I was little I was unable to react completely emotionally to the situation. If I can reconstruct a similar painful situation I will be able to react more fully and so feel less tense inside."3

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1Ibid., p. 95.
2Ibid., p. 96.
3Ibid.
Often the individual feels that fate is against him. As a result, this fate arises from an unconscious need to repeat an earlier painful situation in order to react fully to it. The manifestations can be studied most clearly in the nightmares of a patient suffering from a traumatic neurosis.

Just as the boy's relationship with the father is the most important factor in his development during the Oedipus period, so is the girl's relationship with the mother her greatest problem. Her reaction to the mother's absence is somewhat the same as the boy's to the father's. The case of the girl is the same as the boy, in that at the beginning of the Oedipus situation, the mother is the important parent; therefore, her reaction to the loss of the mother will be similar to those of the boy when he loses the mother.

When the girl loses her father, she may show the same type of reaction as was described for the boy who has lost his mother. The girl may tend to become too strongly attached emotionally to her mother because of the strength of the very early emotional relationship. This helps her to have few emotional reactions at the time of her separation from the father, and therefore regressive behavior is not so common as when the boy is separated from his mother. The effect of the separation is more likely to show itself later in life. She may become homosexual as the boy would become if he lost his mother and were brought up in a completely male environment.

The war has brought to our attention the fact that separation from parents is an exceedingly traumatic experience for any child. It was learned in England that the child suffered more from being separated from his parents through the evacuation scheme than he did when he remained with them and underwent the experience of the blitz. It seems that separation from the mother is more traumatic for small children than separation from the father. The small child reacts immediately to separation from the mother. His reactions to separation from the father tend to go under the surface and do not become evident for several years.¹

The effects on the child of separation from his parents are important in his psychological development. No one can prevent these situations from occurring, because no one is capable of preventing death or marital disagreements.

Immediately following separation from a parent, many children pass through a period of mourning, reacting by regressive behavior, by disturbances of the gastro-intestinal tract, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation,

¹Ibid., pp. 96-97.
or by naughty behavior. These reactions may continue for several months or for the duration of the period of mourning. Every attempt should be made to encourage the child to talk about the absent person, express all of his feelings verbally whether these feelings be love, resentment, or hatred.¹

When separation of the parents is imperative, it is important to prepare the child for separation. How much of a handicap a separation will be to the child's security depends largely on how the matter is handled. Children are always disturbed by a family crisis, and more so if it is kept a mystery. The important things to let a child understand are: 1. Even though the parents separate, the children will still belong to both, and will always be able to see both regularly; 2. Neither parent is the good one or the bad one. This is the hardest rule for the parents to abide by. It is only human for each to feel that the other is at fault and to want to get the children to agree with them. It is damaging for a child to become convinced that one of his parents is bad. The child of a divided home needs to believe in both of his parents just as much as the child of a happy family. Each parent has a better chance of keeping a child's love and respect if the child is never encouraged to take sides.²

The manner in which separation takes place is important, because of the feelings of anxiety aroused in children when they are separated from their parents. All children have these feelings when they are separated from the persons they love. Separation is very painful and upsets the child greatly. Separation from his mother is an essential and difficult part of the growth process of the child and has correlative significance for the mother. The child's progression from the dependent love of infancy to object love—

¹Ibid., p. 98.

²Spock, op. cit., p. 458.
loving his mother for herself and with comprehension of her as a separate person—must be followed by the realization that love continues to exist even when the loved one is not constantly present. This step is not an easy one; permanent harm may result if the early separations are premature or traumatic. The successful completion of this learning experience lays the foundation of the child's essential security in other relationships.\textsuperscript{1}

When placing a child in a foster home, it should be remembered that placement involves two traumatic experiences—the separation from the mother and acquaintance with new people. It is necessary for the child to weaken his attachment to the mother and to make an attachment to a new woman. During this period of adjustment, the child suffers anxiety and shows all or certain of the clinical symptoms; his fears of being deserted, lonely and not loved are increased. As a consequence, the transition from home to foster home should be made gradually so that he can become adjusted to the change without being hurt too much.\textsuperscript{2}

If parents contemplate placing their child, they should give these facts about the traumatic possibilities in the placement serious consideration and determine whether the reasons they intend to make this placement are sufficient to outweigh the disadvantages.

\textsuperscript{1}Winifred Allen and Doris Campbell, \textit{The Creative Nursery Center} (New York, 1948), p. 41.

\textsuperscript{2}English and Pearson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 155.
CHAPTER III

CASE ANALYSIS

Child welfare workers are often confronted with the question, Where does the preparation for placement begin? Some caseworkers contend that a child cannot really be prepared for placement; the separation from his parents must be experienced. No child can face separation without trepidation and anxiety.¹

Taking a child out of his home is a peculiarly wrenching ordeal for parent and child alike, more so if hostilities are involved. It is frightening and dislocating to lose one's parents by death, by distance, and, most of all, by rejection.²

Separation occurring during the early stage of dependency may cause the child to react by a degree of regressive behavior, and to exhibit anxiety symptoms such as frequent crying and refusal of food. An example of this type of behavior is seen in the following cases:

At the time of placement, A. was one year of age, and was considered of normal growth for his age. His relationship with his mother was considered good, and he could not accept placement away from her. In the foster home he resorted to crying at night and would wake up calling his mother. He also refused to eat. The case record indicated that this behavior was very threatening to the foster mother; as a result the child was returned to his mother.

C. was two months old when placed, and too young to realize the meaning of placement, but at the stage of great dependency upon his mother for more gratification. During his stay in a foster home, he cried all night and the foster mother could not cope with his crying. Upon being returned to his mother, he immediately showed signs of being happy and contented.

"For the child whose conflicts with his environment have become internalized, placement, especially in a substitute home, may be impossible; the child may not be able to use the help of foster parents because of his

²Hamilton, op. cit., p. 282.
Case E. was a child ten years of age who exhibited psychopathic behavior. Because of stealing and truanting from school he was referred to the agency. The case record indicated that E. had never had the benefit of parental acceptance. His behavior was aggressively oral, that is, demanding and taking. E. had not developed beyond the 'taking in' level in which he was emotionally engaged in at the time of placement. He was also very insecure, he was hostile, and expressed his hostility through anti-social behavior, such as stealing and truanting. After placement in a special setting, E. showed signs of considerable improvement with no evidences of regression to previous patterns of behavior.

The psychiatrist considered E. a clear example of the relation of early frustrations to placement maladjustment.

Retardation in development is another common reaction to separation.

L. was three years old when placement plans were made for him. In the foster home he exhibited anxiety symptoms of crying, restlessness and regression to bed-wetting.

M. was five years of age when placed in a foster home. He seemed to accept the separation from his mother, but during his first days in the foster home, he refused to talk, and when he did speak, he reverted to 'baby talk.'

We know that separation from the mother is more traumatic for small children, and that the child reacts immediately to separation from his mother.

In the case of B., during the placement process the child refused to leave her mother and exhibited temper tantrums. It was indicated in the case that B.'s adjustment improved, but she continued to show signs of being lonely and deserted. B. lost weight as a result of the separation.

From around the age of three, continuing on through adolescence, we find that the presence of a father figure is necessary if the child is to have successful heterosexual relations later in life.

We see in the case of D., a boy fourteen years of age presenting symptoms of anti-social behavior. As we look back into his early development, we find that, at the first stage of awareness of his father as separate from mother, his father went into the army. D. be-

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1Tbid.
gan to run away from home seemingly in hopes of finding his father. At the same time, D.'s mother pampered him, and showered him with affection. The psychological test administered to D. revealed his hatred for his mother and his hope that he could escape from her. The relationship between D. and his father was slightly better but still far from being satisfactory. D. seemed to have tremendous hatred for both parents, and gave no indication of a strong emotional tie with anyone. D. did not express any feelings about being separated from his parents. It was felt that, due to his behavior, placement in a psychiatric setting might help his development. The case record does not indicate whether or not D.'s behavior improved. However, we can speculate and say that, if his relationships continue on the same level, he will be somewhat disturbed throughout life.

When the child is separated from a parent, he passes through a period of mourning and may react to the situation by regressive behavior.

F. was very much attached to his mother. When she left him to the care of his father, he refused to eat and, when he did eat, he began vomiting. As a result of these disturbances, the father did not want him placed in a foster home. He was therefore placed with his grandmother, and his behavior seemed to improve. During his stay with his grandmother, his father remarried and took F. to live with him. F.'s regressive behavior did not stop immediately, but, as he became adjusted to his stepmother, he proceeded in his normal development.

Leaving the parent can be more difficult for the adolescent than for a young child. Separation from the parent during adolescent years can be threatening if the youth is not helped to work through his ambivalence about breaking away. If the relationships with the parents have been satisfying, the separation may mean that he is giving up something good which he knows can never be replaced. The adolescent has experienced enough of life to know that any change can mean considerable personal readjustment on his part; he may feel that he would rather "put up" with the familiar, desirable or not, than take a chance on the unknown.1

An example of this is seen in the following case.

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K. was sixteen years old when he was committed for placement because of the instability of his mother. He did not seem to present any behavior problems, so it was felt that foster home placement might be easy for him to accept. He rebelled against placement, however, and stated that he would rather remain with his mother than make an adjustment in new surroundings. Since he was old enough to decide for himself, the worker did not force him to move from his mother, but permitted him to remain at home. He did, however, accept some casework services.

No greater tragedy can come to a family than the death of the father or mother, although the surviving parent may double his or her efforts in his endeavor to make good the loss suffered by the children. Sometimes a remarriage may provide the necessary parental figure.

In the case of G. and I. their mothers died when they were very young. Both children were affected by the death of their mothers. They refused to eat, and this continued for a few months. The children were encouraged, however, to talk about their mothers, and this seemed to help them readjust. Both fathers remarried, and the children appeared extremely happy about the remarriage, and established good relationships with their stepmothers. Neither child was placed in a foster home because of their disturbed behavior regarding the death of their mothers, but they were placed with a relative since they were accustomed to this person.

In all of the cases with the exception of three, the parents were accepting of placement. The parents who were not accepting of placement were helped to express their feelings around the separation. Explanations were offered to them concerning the meaning of placement and how it would help the child in his later development. This seemed to help them gradually feel better about separation. But if placement is to be a success, we have to allow for the time factor, as this is very important in preparing one for placement.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Separation is a common problem in casework. We are aware of the fact that families belong and want to belong together. In many instances, however, families cannot stay together because they are incompetent in maintaining themselves as units due to death, neglect in child caring, desertion or other interruptions. As a result of this, sometimes plans must be made for the child in a foster home with substitute parents who can give the child the love, care, and guidance essential in helping him to develop his own potentialities for useful living.

Separation is very painful and traumatic for the child and should not be undertaken lightly. It is the responsibility of the social caseworker to help him to express his feelings about placement, and to offer support so that the child can accept and understand the placement process.

In each of the cases studied, the child reacted to placement by exhibiting symptoms common to his stage of development. Children in the initial dependency or the oral stage reacted by crying, and refusal of food. Those in the next age group, or in the psycho-social anal stage, reverted to regressive behavior, such as refusal to talk, bedwetting, and restlessness. In one case, there was a child who was passing through the oedipal period of development, but his behavior was aggressively oral. We find that this child's oral needs had never been gratified and, as a result, he had not developed beyond this stage emotionally.

Children whose ages fitted into the oedipal stage of development tended to exhibit anxiety in regard to conflicts in identification with the parent of the same sex and acceptance of the parent of the opposite sex. In three
of the cases, the children ranged in ages from fifteen to seventeen and were allowed to choose between foster home placement or to remain in their own homes. Each of these children remained at home, as it was felt foster home placement would not be of value to them.

In foster home placement, one must be aware of the child's stage in personality development, and the expected reactions to change and frustration. In addition, understanding of the child's early developmental years prepares one to accept and alleviate the symptomatic reactions to separation. Therefore, it is essential for all child welfare workers to have an understanding of the psycho-social stages of development, in order to fully understand the significance of a child's reaction to a change in his environment.
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